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C O N F I D E N T I A L CONAKRY 000268

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/14/2019
TAGS: PGOV PMIL PREL ASEC GV
SUBJECT: CNDD REPORTEDLY SEALS \$13 MILLION HELICOPTER DEAL

Classified By: POL/ECON CHIEF SHANNON CAZEAU FOR REASON 1.4 B AND D

¶1. (SBU) According to Embassy sources, Guinea's ruling military junta signed a deal with a British company based in both the UK and Ireland for the purchase of an Italian made presidential helicopter. The deal was reportedly brokered by a Belgian and a Lebanese arms importer in Guinea. Embassy is still verifying the information and the details of the sale. The reported purchase price is \$13 million although the internet list price for this particular aircraft is \$10 million. It is unclear whether the CNDD is expected to pay the total purchase price at once or in installments. Sources also indicate that the CNDD is negotiating a \$3 million deal with another British company (based in France) to upgrade the country's two existing military helicopters, and to provide future maintenance on the fleet.

¶2. (C) Contacts speculate that the deal is being pushed by the Minister of Defense, Sekouba Konate, who is expected to personally benefit from the purchase. He has reportedly been orchestrating the deal in collaboration with Guinea's Ambassador to the UK and Konate's son (who lives in the UK with the Guinean Ambassador). With a \$3 million difference between the list price and the sale price, contacts speculate that a number of people plan to pocket considerable sums of money.

COMMENT

¶3. (C) There have been rumors of a pending helicopter purchase for months. The \$13 million price tag is particularly sensitive since the GoG has committed to contribute \$9 million to elections, but has yet to deliver. Similarly, the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) told the International Contact group that they were short about \$15 million to complete the voter registration process. If the purchase is confirmed, it indicates that the CNDD is able to find funds for its own priorities, but expects the international community to pay for others, especially elections. Furthermore, it is not the first time that military spending has trumped other budgetary needs since the coup. The CNDD has been criticized in the press for awarding a 150 billion GNF (more than \$3 million) contract to a local company for a renovation project at Camp Boiro. The contract was not competed and is rumored to have been pushed by Konate who may have personally benefited from the deal.

¶4. (SBU) Embassy will report further details as they become available. If the sale is confirmed, we will be looking at how the USG should respond. END COMMENT.
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